

Industrial Relations Department
Monthly Report for April, 1948.

TO: George H. Robinson
Executive Secretary

FROM: Roy E. Morris
Industrial Relations Secretary

My resignation becomes effective May 15, 1948. As I come to this my last regular monthly report, I want to be very personal because it more nearly represents my feelings about the work of the League during April. On April 1, one month ago, I completed four years of continuous service with the New Jersey Urban League. One can't help very personal introspection at the point of leaving four years of work in which he kept himself completely dedicated. And yet, this introspection, when written down, might have more than sentimental value; it might produce a warm and interesting sort of evaluation.

This introspection of mine has reviewed the development of an industrial relations program that, if given adequate support could produce the most presently valuable strategic advances of Negroes in employment, and that could bring about definite milestones in a fraction of the time required for other desirable milestones to be reached. This program was the result of an inspiration; an inspiration to seize the current opportunities to skillfully bring to growth and bloom the innumerable seeds of democracy blowing or being buffeted in the winds of discrimination, prejudice, and hatred. This introspective review should be helpful, not only to you, but to my successor also. Where we start now in comparison to our position four years ago might serve to help plot a course for the immediate future.

When I began work here four years ago, as Industrial Secretary, contact with employers was extremely limited and narrow; involving, principally, supplying unskilled labor to a few employers. The absence of continuing full-time attention to this feature of the League's work was clearly evident. No files were in the office that carried any background of continued relationship with any single employer, labor organization, special project, or general program. There were not even leads as to where the work should be picked up.

The absence of adequate clerical help had resulted in pencilled notations of events, carrying no dates or understandable account that would answer the questions of "what", "where", "when", or "why". Fortunately, the first job of cleaning up this accumulation and determining what relationships might be used to begin the further development of our work, was facilitated by the excellent grasp of our work and problems and the memory of the Executive Secretary, Mr. Harold Lett, with respect to the background and needs in the industrial work of the League.

I planned and developed the work, therefore, with Mr. Lett's observations as a basis; and it has now become a thorough-going industrial relations program. Records are in excellent shape, to a great extent showing the volume and quality of the department's work, as well as its breadth, problems, and results.

Excellent relations now exist between the department and a multitude of large and small employers, and ample indications of this may readily be found in the files of the department. Our work has been with the Presidents and top officials of practically every large firm in the greater Newark area, about 500; and of a large number of such firms all over northern New Jersey.

Excellent relations now exist with top state officials and local officers and committeemen of both the C.I.O. and the A.F. of L. Work has progressed with practically every international union with a sizable local in the greater Newark area. Records of the work that developed these relationships, may also be found in the files of the department.

The ability of the League to make competent studies on personnel problems, labor-management problems, and certain problems of production involving human relations, has now been well established, with even Chambers of Commerce referring firms to us. The League is now established as an effective and competent agent in the field of labor relations, able to effect successful integration of Negroes and good placements in all types of work.

In the area of community relations I organized a number of committees to help bring about improvements we are seeking. These committees helped a great deal. However, I believe that committees organized for specific purposes should expire when that purpose has been accomplished, and so no attempt has been made to make most of those committees permanent and thus further increase the already too numerous "good-will" committees sapping the energies of the too few people readily accessible for our objectives. On the other hand, such organizations as the North Jersey Committee on Household Employment Standards and the Industrial Council of Urban Leagues and Similar Agencies (in Northern New Jersey) are permanent. I organized these with full understanding that their work should continue indefinitely and sought to develop leadership with that in mind. With my leaving the League, the chairmen of the Standards Committee, and Industrial Council are respectively, Mrs. Allen P. Ames, of Nutley, and Mr. Llewellyn K. Shivery, Executive Secretary, New Brunswick Urban League.

My work with previously established groups includes governmental, private agency, and lay organizations, that are too numerous to enumerate. I may point out, briefly, that the State Employment Service offices, the newly formed Vocational Services Committee (of the Welfare Federation) and the (New Jersey, Regional) Veterans Administration should not be without our close cooperative activity for long. Last week I submitted a questionnaire, to my Executive from the Vocational Services Committee that should be returned immediately; the V.A. should continue to be encouraged to keep the good representation of Negro employees and certainly not reduce the number of Negroes in top jobs my Veterans Conference in 1946 successfully stimulated. The New Jersey State Employment Service has showed a decided change since 4 years ago, with interviewers not so frequently failing to refer Negroes when they are qualified for known openings. My work and general relationship with individual staff members and officers of the N.J.S.E.S. have been gratifying in this regard. The warm cooperation of individuals on such efforts represented by our Department Store Program, also has my deep gratitude.

When I came here four years ago any able-bodied man or woman, white or black, willing and wanting to work, could find some kind of job. I did not think the staff time of our agency should be used to any great extent to recruit for jobs; that is, for the kind of jobs readily available. Negroes were able to get unskilled jobs, some semi-skilled jobs, and in a few instances, skilled production jobs. However, Negroes were still, with few exceptions, refused jobs in any other area than that including production. White collar jobs were available for Negroes only in governmental agencies; and what are perhaps the four most outstanding types of white collar employment (including central switchboard operators, sales clerks, bus drivers, and private insurance home office workers) still did not include

Negroes. Perhaps the most important reward I have received for the past four years of the most "ambitious" part of my life, has been the personal satisfaction from bringing about the use of Negroes in these strategic points of employment, from the extension of the fields of employment for Negroes in New Jersey.

The principal emphasis of the department has, therefore, been on strategic placement and the extension of the base of jobs available for Negroes; rather than on a mass referral service to unskilled jobs, frequently referring the same individual three to a dozen times a year. Our problems will never be solved without the former emphasis, the latter emphasis means a lot to the individual every time he is out of a job, but in the long run no one gains.

There are a dozen projects that could well be reviewed individually. There is not space, customarily, to do this in our reports to our Board. I am sorry I can't draw a chart or graph that would give a good picture to you at a glance. However, one professional staff member (in the department) with the amount of work even routine reporting of information requires, does not leave any time for the development of such "dream" ideas.

May I thank you for the opportunity to work with the New Jersey Urban League? It has been a valuable experience for me. I have spent a longer part of my life here than elsewhere since I became "grown", or finished college. Perhaps you can understand, through that view, what you, all of you, have meant to me personally. I hope for the League, that you will give your very best, without regard to the "tea-sipping" aspects of social work, but just what, in your hearts you feel, as I have felt in mine, that the Negro-white community needs from the New Jersey Urban League.